

Another Day

Biblical reflections for busy teachers



Thinkers and Doers

“Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.” 1 Peter 1:13

We often divide the world into thinkers and doers. There are those who reflect and there are those who get things done. We tend to assume there is little or no overlap between the two groups.

According to a saying of uncertain origin,* *“Thinkers think and doers do. But until the thinkers do and the doers think, progress will be just another word in the already overburdened vocabulary of the talkers who talk.”*

The big fisherman, Peter, would seem to be in agreement with this. He was certainly a person of action and sometimes, it has to be said, this was without careful reflection. Think, for example, of the occasion in the Garden of Gethsemane when he drew a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant (John 18:10). But here in this call to preparation of our minds for action, the older and wiser (and forgiven) Peter seems to be an advocate of reflective practice. Although elsewhere in his letters he seems to give himself a lower attainment score than Paul for thinking (and that, apparently, without envy) as he acknowledges that his ‘dear brother’ writes some things that are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16), he nevertheless calls us in this verse to be thoughtful and to relate our thinking to our doing.

In the classroom, I can so easily switch into auto-pilot mode because I’ve taught a topic so often through the years. But do I reflect on my practice before, during and/or after teaching the topic? Do I ask often enough not what is being taught in my classroom today but what is being learned? Do I think as well as do? Do I aim at developing young people who both think and do, who have both understanding and skills? Do I model thoughtful action in the classroom?

Great Teacher and Gracious Lord, help me to be a doer who thinks and a thinker who does, for the sake of those I seek to teach. Amen.

* Probably a variant of a quotation attributed to the 17th century French writer, François de La Rochefoucauld: “Thinkers think and doers do. But until the thinkers do and the doers think, progress will be just another word in the already overburdened vocabulary by sense.

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
Lamentations 3:21-23